United Nations A/C.5/55/SR.15

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
14 November 2000

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 23 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Agenda item 153: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

Other matters

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00-70263 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 153: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*) (A/C.5/55/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.5/55/L.6

1. **The Chairman** drew attention to draft resolution A/C.5/55/L.6 entitled "Review of the rates of reimbursement to the Governments of troop-contributing States", which the representative of Cuba had submitted on his behalf following informal consultations. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

2. *Draft resolution A/C.5/55/L.6 was adopted.*

Other matters

3. **The Chairman** said that he had received a communication from the President of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) requesting access to address the Fifth Committee under agenda items 123 (Human resources management) and 124 (United Nations common system). He took it that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213 and in keeping with the Committee's practice at previous sessions of the General Assembly, the Committee wished to invite the representative of CCISUA to make oral statements in connection with agenda items 123 and 124.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. **Ms. Incera** (Costa Rica) said that her delegation was concerned at the risk posed to occupants of the Secretariat building from possible exposure to asbestos arising from the construction work currently under way on a number of floors in the building. The Permanent Mission of Costa Rica had arranged for a sample of construction material retrieved from the area of the Staff Café to be tested in a laboratory and the results of that test were now available. She wondered what measures had been put in place by the Secretariat to ensure the safety of the building's occupants and whether experts in the field had been consulted prior to the commencement of the renovation projects in question.

6. **Mr. Acakpo-Satchivi** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Service in the Department of Management would be invited to respond at a future meeting to the concerns just raised by the representative of Costa Rica.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/55/SR.16

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
16 November 2000

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 25 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Agenda item 122: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*)

Other matters (*continued*)

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00-70899 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 122: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/C.5/55/L.7/Rev.1)

1. **Mr. Ramos** (Portugal), Rapporteur, introducing, on behalf of the chairman, draft resolution A/C.5/55/L.7/Rev.1, which had been drawn up by consensus during informal consultations, said that the word "discussed" in paragraph 6 of the draft resolution should be replaced by the word "requested". He recommended that the Committee should adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

2. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/C.5/55/L.7/Rev.1 as orally revised.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. **Mr. Gaubert** (France), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the European Union, said that, in the light of new information provided by certain Governments, the European Union had associated itself with the draft resolution, which granted exemptions in excess of those recommended by the Committee on Contributions. However, the European Union remained convinced that the opinion of the experts in the Committee on Contributions was essential to guiding the decisions of the General Assembly. The balance struck in General Assembly resolution 54/237 C regarding the procedure for requests for exemptions must be maintained.

5. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that the application of Article 19 was of particular interest because it affected all Member States in one way or another. Her delegation felt that the two issues of exemptions under Article 19 and the strengthening of Article 19 should be considered separately, but it had joined in the consensus in the interests of flexibility. It would await with interest the information in the report of the Secretary-General requested in paragraph 5 of the draft resolution. The burden of strengthening the application of the United Nations Charter must not fall on certain Member States alone, but must be borne by all, in particular those which were most responsible for the Organization's financial situation.

6. **Mr. Aboud** (Comoros) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the results achieved after several weeks of debate, and its gratitude for the efforts made by the coordinator of the informal consultations and the bureau

7. **Mr. Fox** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Canada and New Zealand, said that, while, the three delegations had joined the consensus on the draft resolution and welcomed its adoption, they regretted that the process leading to its adoption had been so extended and time-consuming. While they advocated granting exemptions only to those countries which figured in the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions, the additional information presented by some applicant States suggested that there was a case for going beyond those recommendations, since the Committee on Contributions itself had not had access to that information.

8. The fact that the Committee had taken steps to strengthen Article 19, including a decision on the "net/net" approach for the calculation of arrears, was an important advance in tightening the application of that Article. Further work was necessary on measures to encourage the timely, full and unconditional payment of assessed contributions and on ways to improve the consideration by both the Committee on Contributions and the Fifth Committee of requests for exemptions.

9. **Mr. Chandra** (India) expressed satisfaction with the result of the consultations, which would enable all the countries involved to maintain their voting powers. His delegation valued highly the advice of the Committee on Contributions with regard to the application of Article 19, but also recognized the pre-eminent role of the General Assembly in taking the final decision. The Fifth Committee should continue, with due sympathy and consideration, to examine all requests for exemptions under Article 19.

10. **Mr. Alatrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the exhaustive efforts made to arrive at a consensus and commended the flexibility shown by certain delegations, in particular those of the European Union and Brazil. It would be important in future for the Committee on Contributions to substantiate its recommendations objectively so as to facilitate discussion by the members of the Fifth Committee of possible exemptions under Article 19. It was crucial for all Member States to pay their contributions in full to allow the United Nations to overcome the financial

difficulties it currently faced. It should be recalled that exemptions allowed under Article 19 were only of an ad hoc nature.

11. **Mr. Fujii** (Japan) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus because of the balance struck in the draft resolution. However, it wished to express the hope that recommendations made by the Committee on Contributions would be respected to the maximum extent possible. The experts who sat on that Committee were worthy of the Fifth Committee's trust.

12. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the draft resolution just adopted once again confirmed the authority of the General Assembly to grant exemptions under Article 19. His delegation felt that the linkage between the strengthening of Article 19 and the granting of exemptions was unsuitable. It would have been preferable to deal with the two topics in separate resolutions.

13. **Mr. Hartog** (Brazil) said that his delegation shared the concern of other delegations concerning the linkage between the granting of exemptions and the strengthening of Article 19, both of which were subjects that must always be considered on their own merits. His delegation would await with interest the information to be submitted by the Secretary-General and the Committee on Contributions concerning the strengthening of Article 19. It hoped that in future the Fifth Committee would concentrate on the strengthening of the financial situation of the Organization rather than the granting of exemptions.

14. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that his delegation had always strongly supported the strengthening of Article 19, which was the only part of the Charter which prompted Member States to shoulder their share of the Organization's financial burden. The two subjects, namely of the granting of exemptions and the strengthening of Article 19, must be considered separately so as to avoid the type of impassioned debate that the draft resolution had generated. Article 19 did in fact help to ensure that States paid what they owed. Decisions must be made on a well-informed basis, but action must also be taken to ensure that the granting of exemptions did not weaken the Organization. Perhaps it was time to consider alternative mechanisms to ensure that recourse to exemptions should not be excessive and that payment of contributions should be prompt.

15. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) said that her delegation had at the outset expressed its full support for the requests for exemption made by the States mentioned in the draft resolution. It would await with keen interest the report of the Secretary-General and the recommendation of the Committee on Contributions.

16. **The Chairman** noted that the flexibility shown by the delegations reflected a very great sense of responsibility. He trusted that the Committee would be able to continue its work in that spirit during the rest of the session.

Other matters

17. **The Chairman** said that he had received a communication from the President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) requesting access to address the Committee at the current session. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213, and in keeping with the practice of the Committee at previous sessions of the General Assembly, he took it that the Committee wished to invite the representative of FICSA to make an oral statement in connection with agenda items 123 and 124.

18. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/55/SR.17

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
21 November 2000

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 17th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 1 November 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 116: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*)

Agenda item 123: Human resources management

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00-72202 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 116: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/54/793; A/55/352 and Corr.1, A/55/499 and A/55/514)

Agenda item 123: Human resources management (A/53/955; A/54/257, A/54/279 and Corr.1 and A/54/450; A/55/57 and Add.1, A/55/168, A/55/253 and Corr.1, A/55/270, A/55/397, A/55/399 and Corr.1, A/55/427, A/55/494, A/55/499 and A/55/514; A/C.5/54/2 and A/C.5/54/21; A/C.5/54/L.3; A/C.5/55/L.3; A/C.5/55/CRP.1 and CRP.2)

1. **The Deputy Secretary-General**, introducing the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253 and Corr.1), said that the comprehensive human resources management program set out in the report reflected the Organization's increased involvement in field operations, which currently employed the bulk of its human and financial resources; the Member States' increasing demands for competent United Nations staff and managers and the cost-effective implementation of mandates; and the shift, in human resources management, towards a more broadly conceived culture of staff development, high performance and continuous learning. In response to those changes in the internal and external environment, the United Nations had elaborated a set of core values and competencies, improved human resources planning, streamlined the personnel manual and expanded the staff training program. Compliance with the performance appraisal system (PAS) had greatly improved, and the average length of time required for recruitment had been shortened from 465 days to 275 days.

2. With respect to recruitment, placement and promotion, the Secretary-General's report proposed a new system to remedy the continuing problems with the existing system, which was slow, complex and insufficiently transparent. The new system would emphasize the delegation of authority and accountability by empowering line managers to make the final choice of a candidate to fill a given post. Two compelling reasons for that change were, first, that managers could hardly be held accountable for their team's performance if they did not have input into decisions of such centrality; and, second, that managers were best able to decide which candidate was most suitable for a given post. At the same time, managers would exercise that new authority within very strict guidelines. They would be required to develop selection criteria well in advance and to apply those criteria in an objective and documented manner. The process would be overseen by central review panels at each duty station, on which the staff would be represented. A reduction in the number of steps involved would further reduce the time-frame for recruitment from 275 days to an estimated 120 days.

3. Although those changes did not depart radically from current arrangements, concerns had been expressed about the delegation of authority and about a perceived reduction in the role of the staff. However, under the Secretary-General's plan, the Office of Human Resources Management would retain a strong oversight and monitoring role, and staff would continue to have recourse to existing mechanisms such as the Joint Appeals Board. Staff involvement in the process would continue, but would occur at the earlier stage of establishing job evaluation criteria. At the end of the process, the central review body would examine managers' decisions to ensure that proper procedures had been respected.

4. In view of the Organization's new challenges and increased field presence, its staff required a judicious and, to some extent, planned series of exposures to a broad range of activities and assignments. The new mobility policy proposed by the Secretary-General represented a shift from a voluntary to a managed approach that defined mobility as movement not only between duty stations, but also between functions and occupations. A key principle was that staff members should not "own" specific posts and managers should not "own" specific staff members. The Secretary-General proposed the gradual introduction of time-limited occupancy of posts and linkage between mobility and promotion. To address the issues raised by increased staff mobility, the Organization would seek Member States' cooperation in easing restrictions on spouse employment, revise rules that currently appeared to penalize mobility, devise means of promoting staff serving in the field and otherwise combat the "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" phenomenon that discouraged mobility. Such mobility was crucial to the Organization's credibility, and undoubtedly could

be achieved while showing fairness and sensitivity to the needs of staff.

5. In the coming year, the Secretary-General would review the issues relating to contractual arrangements, which were currently creating inequitable situations among staff members, and would continue his dialogue with the staff before submitting specific recommendations to the General Assembly. A worldwide survey of work/life issues affecting staff members' work and mobility decisions would be conducted with a view to facilitating the Secretariat's consideration of questions such as flexible work schedules and spouse employment. The Secretariat would also study ways of strengthening career development and improving its expensive and time-consuming internal system of justice. The Secretary-General's report contained a proposal to establish a high-level post of ombudsman, who would be independent of both management and staff.

6. All those proposals were based on the idea of enhanced accountability, which was dealt with in another report of the Secretary-General (A/55/270). According to that principle, every staff member should understand the requirements of his or her job and should have the tools and the training to perform that job. In addition, staff performance must be assessed fairly, and such assessments should result in rewards or sanctions, as appropriate. The Secretary-General had decided to establish an annual "performance compact" with senior managers that would include their responsibilities in the area of human resources. To assist the Secretary-General, the Office of Human Resources Management was preparing indicators to track progress with respect to gender balance, geographical representation and PAS compliance. The newly established Accountability Panel would review the reports of oversight bodies and consider the extent to which their recommendations had been implemented by managers.

7. The Secretary-General's proposals responded to the Member States' demand, contained in the Millennium Declaration, that the Secretariat should adopt "the best management practices and technologies available". Lastly, she drew attention to the Secretary-General's most recent report on staff security (A/55/494), which contained very significant proposals for professionalizing and strengthening the Organization's security management system. In view of the vital importance of addressing that issue without delay, she hoped that those recommendations would be considered favourably.

8. **Ms. Salim** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/55/427), said that the report covered the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. Chapter II of the report focused primarily on Secretariat staff in posts subject to geographical distribution. Chapter III contained information on the application of the system of desirable ranges for the geographical distribution of staff. Chapter IV contained a demographic analysis of a larger staff population and included data on gender, age, length of service, staffing by department and office and anticipated retirements over the next five years.

9. The report of the Secretary-General on amendments to the Staff Rules (A/55/168) had been submitted in accordance with staff regulation 12.3 and contained the full text of amendments to the Staff Rules which the Secretary-General proposed to implement as from 1 January 2001. The report also contained the rationale for those amendments, which were of a technical nature. Lastly, she drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the list of staff of the United Nations Secretariat (A/C.5/55/L.3) as at 1 July 2000.

10. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) introduced the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on its proactive investigation of the education grant entitlement (A/55/352). In fulfillment of its mandate to assess the potential for fraud and other violations within program areas, OIOS analysed systems of control in high-risk operations and made recommendations for corrective action. In view of the number of reports submitted to OIOS on the education grant entitlement, OIOS had concluded that there was a potential for fraud in that area.

11. In 1998, more than 1,300 Headquarters staff members had submitted education grant claims for some 3,300 dependants. Total education grant payments had exceeded $25 million; the average annual payment had been about $19,000 per staff member.

12. To detect weaknesses in the implementation of that entitlement that might make it possible to defraud the system, OIOS had reviewed the processing of

education grant claims at Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and had interviewed key personnel to obtain a full understanding of the education grant process and the associated problems and risks.

13. The education grant system was based on a declarative model and relied on the claimant personally to guarantee the truthfulness of the claim. The OIOS review had revealed the means by which some staff members had defrauded or attempted to defraud the Organization; details were contained in the report. The average amount involved was $26,500, although, in one case, it had exceeded $69,000. At the same time, the report should not create a perception that most claimants were dishonest; on the contrary, whereas 1,300 claims had been submitted in 1998, only seven reports of alleged fraud had been received for that period.

14. The administration of the education grant benefit was cumbersome and, therefore, prone to error. In addition, since it was, to some degree, subject to discretionary processing at the front line, it was open to opportunistic behavior. Accordingly, OIOS had recommended corrective measures to strengthen procedures that would reduce the risk of fraud. The Department of Management had indicated that it agreed that the process should be simplified and that it would give serious consideration to all the recommendations of OIOS.

15. The follow-up audit of the recruitment process in the Office of Human Resources Management (A/55/397) had focused on ensuring the effectiveness of the recruitment reforms proposed by that Office. Accordingly, OIOS had stressed the need for a strategic plan setting out goals and action plans for achieving them. The Office of Human Resources Management had concurred with all the audit recommendations and had begun to develop an innovative, intranet-based process incorporating some of the suggestions contained in the report, such as enhanced Web functionality, automated databases, an improved search mechanism, improved tracking and monitoring and easy access to relevant documents.

16. On the basis of the audit, OIOS had recommended, inter alia, that the Office should work closely with departments in developing targets and providing guidance for the achievement of gender balance and equitable geographical distribution; that the Office should establish candidate evaluation criteria using scoring and weighting methods for considering subjective and institutional factors; that the planning function, including the use of human resources management statistics and benchmarks, should be identified as a departmental priority to ensure the ongoing development of strategic plans and the coordination of the Office's initiatives; and that the Office should conduct a comprehensive review of the National Competitive Examination system with a view to adapting it, if necessary, to meet managerial needs. Lastly, program managers should be given the authority and flexibility they needed to respond to emerging situations, and should be held accountable for their decisions.

17. **Ms. King** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/55/399), said that women's participation at the highest levels of national and international decision-making had not changed significantly over the last five years. Women accounted for only 13.8 per cent of legislators in national parliaments and only 5.8 per cent of permanent representatives to the United Nations in New York. Within the United Nations system, the rate of progress, while not remarkable, had been better than in most countries, with the possible exception of the Nordic countries. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had achieved the goal of gender balance in Professional and higher posts, and had maintained it for the last two years. The Department of Management, the Department of Public Information and the Office of Human Resources Management had also met that target. Women accounted for 39.2 per cent of Professional staff in posts subject to geographical distribution and 36.5 per cent of all Professional staff with appointments of one year or longer.

18. Gender balance at the senior and policy-making levels had improved significantly. Over the last five years, the percentage of women at the D-1 level and higher in posts subject to geographical distribution had risen from 17.1 to 30.9 per cent. The increase in the number of women in positions of authority and influence was changing the way in which women's roles and opportunities in the Organization were perceived. Recently, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) had become the first regional

commission to be headed by a woman. Gains had also been made at the P-5 level.

19. To accelerate progress, some United Nations organizations had set targets for the recruitment of women, strengthened special measures governing the selection of women candidates, evaluated progress in meeting gender equality goals in appraising the performance of managers and instituted gender-sensitivity training. At the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the executive heads of United Nations organizations had pledged to intensify their efforts to meet those goals. At the same time, competence, integrity, efficiency and equitable geographical distribution would remain the paramount considerations in the appointment of staff.

20. In line with the Secretary-General's new human resources management strategy, heads of departments and offices had been asked to develop action plans for achieving gender balance, which would serve to identify opportunities and limitations for improving women's representation in individual departments and offices. Program managers had been asked to set targets for the selection of women candidates for current and projected vacancies and to actively seek out women candidates for those posts. Those targets would make it possible to measure progress more accurately and to identify and address challenges in specific areas of the Organization's work.

21. At the Security Council's 4208th meeting, held on United Nations Day, most of the participants had indicated that they would welcome an increase in the number of women serving in all areas of peacekeeping operations, including their appointment as special representatives of the Secretary-General and heads of mission.

22. She hoped that Member States would put forward more women candidates for appointment to United Nations posts. Women must be encouraged to apply for such posts, since women applicants were far outnumbered by male applicants. In line with the current emphasis on developing mechanisms to encourage, monitor and assess the performance of managers in meeting gender equality goals, the current report on the status of women in the Secretariat contained a new table indicating which departments and offices had met or exceeded the goal of gender balance. In the coming year, priority would be given to identifying sources of women candidates for the vacancies identified in the departmental action plans, evaluating progress in implementing the plans, designing measures to enhance the career development of General Service staff, most of whom were women, and making further progress on the work/family agenda.

23. **Mr. Bouayad-Agha** (Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)), introducing the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the administration of justice at the United Nations (A/55/57), said that, despite the widespread view that the Organization's most valuable asset was its staff, the measures repeatedly recommended by the General Assembly, the Joint Inspection Unit and other organs for the benefit of the staff had not yet been implemented. The Organization had no career development plan, no system for rotating staff among different services and no fair, equitable and transparent appointment and promotion system. It seemed that, in many cases, promotions depended solely on the goodwill of supervisors, who were free to evaluate candidates as they chose without being held accountable for their recommendations. The Organization's human resources management was not yet at the level of its principles and objectives. The time had come to take the necessary decisions in earnest.

24. As for the administration of justice, unfortunately neither the Organization nor its staff currently had access to the justice they deserved. The JIU had devoted much effort to the report, and its Inspectors had met on various occasions those engaged in the administration of justice as well as representatives of the Administration and staff representatives. They had always come to the same conclusion: the administration of justice at the United Nations had to become faster, fairer, more effective and more equitable. Access to a system of administration of justice was not a concession on the part of the Administration; it was a universally recognized right.

25. When the international organizations had initially been created they had been granted certain privileges, including immunity of jurisdiction, to protect them against arbitrary action by States. Paradoxically, such immunity left their staffs without protection against the organizations themselves. Internal systems of recourse had thus become necessary to offer staff guarantees on a par with those offered by domestic courts. The organizations must not invoke their immunity in dealing with the legitimate claims of their employees.

26. The conclusions and recommendations of the report concentrated on improving the present system by revitalizing its mechanisms rather than proposing a new system. Recommendation 1 proposed the establishment of an office for the settlement of disputes and the administration of justice. The organs currently responsible for resolving conflicts between the staff and the Administration were part of the Administration itself. While there was no reason to believe that such units were in any way subjected to undue pressure from management, their administrative and budgetary dependency on the Administration undoubtedly made them vulnerable. The image and credibility of such units would be enhanced if it was clear that they enjoyed independence.

27. The United Nations currently had no effective mechanism for the settlement of disputes between staff and managers through conciliation, mediation and negotiation. Recommendation 2 therefore proposed the establishment of an Ombudsman's office. While that would have some financial implications, the lack of such a service currently resulted in the loss of valuable resources, as staff had to participate in the meetings of internal appeal organs dealing with unsettled disputes. Unsettled disputes also undermined morale.

28. Recommendation 3 called for a series of measures to eliminate restrictions on the authority of the Administrative Tribunal and to ensure that it enjoyed greater independence and respect. The Tribunal, like the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization, must have the power to order the rescinding of contested decisions and the performance of obligations, and it must have the exclusive right, when applicable, to determine the appropriate amount of compensation paid to appellants. While compensation levels had been relatively low for many years, more recently a single case had cost the Organization nearly half a million dollars. The Tribunal was to be commended for having suggested that the official responsible for the unfair decisions in question should answer for the consequences of his actions. Such an approach could only help reduce the number of arbitrary measures taken by certain managers.

29. During the period of preparation of the report, some 43 per cent of the unanimous recommendations of the Joint Appeals Board had been rejected by the Administration, which had determined that such recommendations were flawed for one reason or another. That had resulted in a great waste of time and resources. The Administration should ensure that the members it appointed to such bodies had a better knowledge of the applicable law and of the examination of evidence. Recommendation 4 accordingly proposed that the members of such bodies should be provided with basic legal training. The Administration had already endorsed that suggestion and had begun organizing courses for them.

30. Recommendation 5 addressed the need to establish higher appeal instances, for which there was a prima facie case. To take the matter further would, however, require consultation with all the organizations in the United Nations system.

31. The Inspectors had found that staff appeared not to enjoy the same degree of legal protection as management, which was contrary to the principle of equal access to justice. It had therefore formulated recommendation 6, on the strengthening of the Office of the Coordinator of the Panel of Counsel, which the Administration had endorsed, although not to the letter.

32. The administration of justice was extremely important in the day-to-day operation of the international civil service. People resented injustice more than they did material loss. The attention of the Committee, the management and the staff would be required to establish a lasting system compatible with the Organization's ambitions and in harmony with its objectives.

33. **Mr. Fondaumière** (Director of the Management Policy Office) said that the report entitled "Follow-up report on management irregularities causing financial losses to the Organization" (A/54/793) had been drawn up at the request of the General Assembly, as expressed in its resolution 53/225 of 8 June 1999. The subject of the report was very complex and covered a wide range of issues, and the report's preparation had provided many opportunities for dialogue and the exchange of views.

34. While financial recovery had been vigorously pursued in cases of fraud, it had been more difficult to enforce in cases of gross negligence because the latter were harder to define. Owing to a lack of specific procedures, the relevant staff rule could not be invoked. Several options had been identified and were under consideration to fill that gap, and the report outlined procedures developed by the Secretary-General to deal with such cases. The prevention and detection of management irregularities was of the

utmost importance. It was preferable to take preventive action rather than take action after the fact, once an irregularity had occurred. Identifying risk factors and taking appropriate measures to lessen such risks was a crucial management tool.

35. The report also mentioned measures taken recently to establish a more effective accountability mechanism and improve internal control.

36. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget Questions (ACABQ)) said that the comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on three reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/253, A/55/270 and A/54/793) were contained in its report in document A/55/499. ACABQ had requested additional information on those texts, some of which appeared in annexes I to VIII of its report.

37. ACABQ had not taken a position on the central proposal of the Secretary-General, namely the introduction of three types of appointment contracts but had noted that the differences between the current permanent contract and the proposed continuing contract had not been adequately explained. It had therefore sought clarification, and the additional information provided had been included in annex V, along with information on related issues in annexes VI and VII.

38. In its report, ACABQ stated that the human resources planning process must be carefully monitored and reviewed in the light of experience. Priority must be given to rejuvenating the Secretariat. ACABQ found the Secretary-General's efforts to promote mobility in the P-3 to D-2 levels commendedable. On the other hand, it criticized the practice of giving short-term contracts for periods of eleven months with a break of one month prior to rehiring of the same staff member.

39. Comments concerning the reports on accountability and management irregularities appeared in paragraphs 22 and 23.

40. ACABQ was of the view that the impartial and fair administration of justice would be a key ingredient in the successful implementation of the Secretary-General's overall human resources management reform. It had reviewed the JIU report on the administration of justice (A/55/57) and the related comments of the Secretary-General (A/55/57/Add.1) and had issued its own comments and recommendations in a separate report (A/55/514). He drew particular attention to its comments on the status of the secretariat of the Administrative Tribunal in paragraphs 5 and 6 and the effect of that body's statute on redress available to United Nations staff in paragraphs 9 and 10.

41. **Mr. Apata** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Organization's staff, as its most important asset, had a fundamental role in the effective and efficient functioning of the United Nations. The Group considered that human resources management reform must be aimed at enhancing equitable geographical distribution throughout the United Nations system in accordance with the Charter, improving conditions and quality of service for United Nations staff and providing a better environment and improved communication between the staff and the Administration. It must also ensure that there was a comprehensive and fair system of placement, recruitment and promotion and a well-designed and transparent system of delegation of authority, with proper accountability and responsibility and the fair administration of justice.

42. It was regrettable that ACABQ had been unable to formulate constructive recommendations concerning the Secretary-General's proposals for human resources management reform, a fact which underscored the sensitive nature of those proposals.

43. Concerning the proposal of the Secretary-General on the subject of staff mobility, the Group requested the Secretary-General to provide more information regarding its implications for the promotion of staff, the maximum and minimum term for each post at the different duty stations and the availability of expertise in the Organization. Due consideration must also be given to the importance of institutional memory. The Group would welcome further clarification of the Secretary-General's proposal concerning contractual arrangements and their potential impact on career prospects and the international character of the United Nations staff.

44. The Group considered that the mandatory age of separation should be 62 years. In order to ensure fairness, staff hired prior to 1990 should be given the option of retiring at 60 years with full benefits or continuing to work until the age of 62. The Group was still concerned about delays in appointments and underscored the importance of adopting uniform

appointment procedures. Well-designed systems of accountability must be put in place before authority was delegated.

45. Proposals for the improvement of the administration of justice must take into consideration the fact that the Office of Human Resources Management played a central role in establishing priorities and monitoring observance of policies. The Group welcomed the JIU report on the administration of justice and looked forward to its consideration. Human resources management reform should be considered in a comprehensive manner and should in any case not entail staff cutbacks or budget reductions.

46. **Ms. Dantoine** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia said that for some years the European Union had supported the Secretary-General's efforts to create a culture of adaptability, creativity and innovation, continuous training and excellence in performance and management. Human resources management reform played a decisive role in the continued improvement of the effectiveness of United Nations programmes by ensuring that management had the necessary competence to make decisions and a sense of responsibility and accountability, and that the staff were competent and motivated. The staff were the greatest asset of the United Nations, and must be placed at the centre of its concerns, as the Organization must manage people, not posts. The European Union welcomed the dialogue between the Administration and the staff. The enhancement of management techniques was a way of ensuring that the high standard of the Secretariat's performance would continue in the future, while a modern human resources management policy would help to attract and keep the best staff.

47. The European Union noted with interest the discussions taking place in the areas of human resources planning and management, streamlining of rules and procedures, and contractual arrangements. At a time when the Organization faced a wave of retirements, the system of planning and human resources management was of utmost importance. Planning went hand in hand with career development and training. The current skills inventory should result in the provision of training to allow staff to carry out more diversified duties. Concerning the simplification of contractual arrangements, there was a need to address the problems mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. The new arrangements must be clear and transparent for the staff, provide the possibility of more harmonious career development and give increased guarantees for the staff's future. They should also maintain the independent nature of the Organization's staff and take into consideration the social aspects of departure from service.

48. The European Union supported the initiatives taken by the Secretary-General in respect of recruitment, placement, promotions and mobility. While the time required to fill a post had decreased some 40 per cent in two years, it still stood at 275 days. The objective of 120 days was a reasonable target. The proposed new method of filling vacant posts was a welcome initiative, but it would be important to monitor decisions taken by the programme managers. The national competitive examinations for entry into the Secretariat remained a crucial element ensuring the widest possible geographical distribution. The Secretary-General's commitment to gender balance too was a very important aspect of recruitment.

49. The European Union strongly supported the general objective of making mobility, as one of the obligations of all officials recruited at the international level, an essential aspect of career development. Since mobility brought with it constraints for officials with families, appropriate accompanying measures would be required. The European Union also supported the Secretary-General's proposals on the creation of occupational networks, the limitation of the period during which a post could be occupied, encouragement of service in the field and the introduction of a system of managed reassignment, and it welcomed the initiatives under consideration to promote mobility among the organizations in the common system.

50. The European Union commended the staff members who worked in the field in increasingly dangerous conditions, sometimes at the risk of their lives. It welcomed the reports and proposals of the Secretary-General on staff safety and stressed the importance of respect for the privileges and immunities of staff, including those who were locally recruited. It was the responsibility of the Governments hosting United Nations operations to provide for their security. Accordingly, all Member States had a duty to ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

51. **Mr. Powles** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that the current external realities made the need for human resources management reform even more acute than it had been in 1997, when the Secretary-General had first proposed his package of reform measures. The United Nations had developed from a Headquarters-based Organization to one with a strong field presence that required a mobile work force. The problems arising from the high vacancy rate and the imminent departure of a large number of staff must also be urgently addressed.

52. Changes outside the Organization had also had an impact. Member States were examining the United Nations with increasing scrutiny to ensure that resources were being managed effectively and efficiently. In order to attract the talent that was needed in the twenty-first century, the Organization must pursue policies that would invigorate and rejuvenate its human resources while keeping it in step with the human resources management reforms being implemented by Governments around the world, other international organizations and the private sector. The Secretariat must adapt and modernize its human resources management policies so that it would become an employer of choice and attract the best and brightest. More fundamentally, it must offer a challenging and rewarding work environment and attractive career opportunities.

53. The delegations on whose behalf he spoke fully supported the Secretary-General's reform proposals as a means of addressing current challenges and preparing for future ones by creating a simplified structure, empowering personnel and developing an efficient, effective and accountable Secretariat. The report of the Secretary-General (A/55/253 and Corr.1) showed that a great deal of progress had been made over the previous two years in comprehensively reforming the United Nations system and that the Secretary-General had rightly moved forward under his authority as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization. He welcomed the fact that the package of human resources management reform proposals required the Committee's agreement on only one issue. That was as it should be, since managers must be allowed to manage and to take forward the reform agenda as expeditiously as possible.

54. Australia, Canada and New Zealand strongly supported the proactive measures that had been taken to achieve a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service that truly reflected the Organization's global reach. In particular, they supported the Secretary-General's proposals to increase the mobility of staff, enhance accountability, adapt contracts to better serve the Organization and its staff and promote initiatives on the internal justice system, the development of competencies, performance management, professional development and human resources planning.

55. Efforts to achieve gender parity in the Secretariat should be speeded up. The delegations on whose behalf he spoke supported the Secretary-General's call to Member States to propose more women candidates for a broader array of occupations, for appointment or election to intergovernmental and expert bodies and for positions within the Secretariat.

56. **Mr. Skjønsberg** (Norway) said that only a global team of motivated and highly competent staff could make a reality of the Secretary-General's vision of an efficient Secretariat capable of achieving the results sought by Member States. Norway therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposals for human resources management reform and was pleased to note the progress that had been made thus far towards their implementation. Planning tools, such as the Secretariat-wide human resources management system, should be further refined to ensure that the Organization was able to attract, retain and motivate staff of the highest caliber at all levels, especially younger staff.

57. In that connection, his delegation noted that in 1999 the lack of job opportunities for spouses had been a major reason cited by staff for resigning from the Organization. Norway welcomed the introduction of flexible working hours, sick leave for family-related emergencies and the introduction of paternity leave under the maternity leave entitlement. Given the increase in dual-career families, it was also pleased to note that the Governments of countries that hosted United Nations offices and programmes had been requested to look into ways to permit and help spouses of United Nations employees to find employment. The above-mentioned family policy measures would also be instrumental in achieving the goal of a 50/50 gender distribution in the Secretariat, thereby broadening its resource base and improving the quality and efficiency of its work.

58. The current process for filling posts was lengthy and complex and every effort should be made to

shorten the period it took to recruit new personnel. The establishment of a global electronic job bank would be helpful in that regard.

59. The complexity of the Organization's activities required a versatile and multi-skilled international civil service. Norway therefore supported the movement from a voluntary to a managed approach to mobility, provided that mobility was understood in a broad sense to mean movement within and among functions, departments, occupations, duty stations, organizations of the United Nations system and beyond. While due regard should be given to institutional memory and expertise, that consideration should not be used to impede the mobility of staff. Norway supported the proposed changes in the role of the Office of Human Resources Management, under which departments would undertake all day-to-day personnel administration.

60. The Secretary-General's goal of creating a fair, equitable, transparent and measurable system of performance management for all staff members was a big challenge and required the introduction of a truly performance-based management culture that recognized and rewarded excellent performance and adequately addressed under-performance. In that regard, the newly introduced performance appraisal system (PAS) should be continuously reviewed in the light of experience and feedback from staff and managers.

61. His delegation noted the concern expressed by ACABQ at the practice of offering 11-month contracts, which were frequently renewed after a break of one month. While he agreed that the practice raised issues of budgetary transparency, it might also indicate that the current system of contractual arrangements was too rigid, complicated and out of step with current needs. Norway supported the proposal that all recruits except short-term staff should join the Organization initially on a fixed-term appointment, with a specified term of up to five years. Only after a minimum of two years' probationary service should staff members be considered for a conversion to an open-ended continuous appointment. His delegation looked forward to further discussion of those proposals and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his dialogue with the staff before presenting specific recommendations to the General Assembly.

62. **Mr. Stanczyk** (Poland) said that human resources management reform was part of the overall process of change and modernization of the United Nations. The Organization could not achieve the results expected of it without a comprehensive overhaul of its personnel policies and a review and upgrading of its mechanisms and processes for implementing the legislative intent of Member States. His delegation noted the changes that had been introduced in personnel policies. What was lacking, however, was a comprehensive plan that clearly stated the results to be attained within a specific time-frame and established procedures for monitoring its implementation.

63. The measures that had been introduced thus far by the Office of Human Resources Management were welcome, and the Office should not be deterred by bureaucratic resistance and other impediments. It had a crucial role to play in the overall direction, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the policy directives established by the General Assembly.

64. Poland supported the Secretary-General's proposals for, inter alia, predicting staffing needs through effective human resources planning, shortening the recruitment process and empowering program managers. Those goals were in line with the time-tested experience of national and international institutions in attracting high-calibre staff and the right mix of talents to deliver quality program results.

65. It would be useful to know, however, what the role of governmental institutions and Permanent Missions to the United Nations would be in the recruitment process; what would be the role and function of a global electronic job bank and who would provide input for the bank; how the information stored in the bank would be reviewed and updated; how all interested persons could have access to job opportunities with the Organization; and how the criteria of transparency, fairness and free competition for jobs would be reconciled with the principles of equitable geographical representation and gender balance. His delegation also looked forward to a thorough debate on the important changes in contractual arrangements envisaged in the reform proposals.

66. While the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/253 and Corr.1) rightly stressed the importance of establishing a mechanism for program managers and

staff to be held accountable for the implementation of human resources management reform, the history of that complex issue had been one of the declarations of intent and half-hearted measures lacking in specificity. Poland fully supported the need for enhanced monitoring not only for purposes of accountability but also to improve the performance evaluation of program budgets. To that end, an information technology system covering all substantive activities of the United Nations should be put in place as a prerequisite for successful monitoring.

67. Lastly, Poland, thousands of whose nationals were serving in peacekeeping and other missions, supported measures to enhance the security and safety of United Nations personnel serving on missions and was in favour of reviewing the level of resources earmarked for that purpose.

68. **Mr. Macheve** (Mozambique) said that, while his delegation generally welcomed the progress that had been made in human resources management reform, it remained concerned at the unacceptable lengthiness of the recruitment process. The lack of qualified candidates, which was one of the causes of the delay, reflected the inability of the United Nations to attract the best and most qualified personnel in the world. The time-consuming internal bureaucratic procedures should also be streamlined and a strategic plan devised to integrate all reform initiatives under a single umbrella so as to enable the Organization to meet its evolving staffing needs.

69. Another area of concern was the need to ensure equitable geographical representation in the Secretariat. While the primary reason for recruitment should be competence and the appropriate qualifications, the Secretary-General should aggressively pursue recruitment in unrepresented and under-represented countries, where qualified personnel could also be found. Even though national competitive examinations should continue to be conducted in unrepresented and under-represented countries, they had not been effective in achieving the desired goals and alternative models for increasing the recruitment of candidates from unrepresented and under-represented countries should be explored.

70. On the question of gender balance, Mozambique endorsed the goal of a 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 and noted with satisfaction the increase in the number of women in the Secretariat. Regrettably, the target set by the General Assembly would not be met and the Secretary-General should therefore devise a specific strategy to achieve gender balance in the Secretariat in the near future.

71. World leaders had recently given the Organization a renewed mandate to play a more active role in international affairs. That goal could be achieved only if the Organization was served by a very professional, empowered and responsible staff and managers. It was time to rejuvenate the Secretariat with young, highly qualified, competent and motivated professionals. The United Nations belonged to its Member States and the composition of its Secretariat must therefore reflect the Organization's wide membership and cultural differences.

72. **Mr. Akasaka** (Japan) said that the effective functioning of the Organization was entirely dependent on the staff of its Secretariat, and the unprecedented number of vacancies and retirements over the next five years presented a unique opportunity to implement human resources management reform and to redress the geographical imbalance within the Secretariat by putting all Member States within their desirable range as early as possible. The Secretary-General should submit to the General Assembly a more detailed and comprehensive report on the composition of the Secretariat and on the progress made in addressing the situation of unrepresented and under-represented States.

73. Despite the efforts of the Office of Human Resources Management, the number of Japanese nationals, for example, occupying posts subject to the principle of equitable geographical distribution was less than half of the lower end of the desirable range, a situation that was of grave concern to his Government and to political leaders in Japan. He hoped that the standards and guidelines issued by the Office of Human Resources Management would ensure equitable geographical representation and that program managers would be held accountable for their final decisions on staffing.

74. Concerning recruitment, the national competitive examination was an important tool for recruiting qualified personnel and correcting inequities in geographical distribution. His delegation would welcome confirmation of its understanding that posts at the P-2 and P-3 levels would continue to be filled through national competitive examinations. The slow

and cumbersome process of recruitment, placement and promotion was clearly an obstacle to attracting the best qualified candidates and the Secretary-General's proposals aimed at expediting the recruitment process by filling vacancies within 120 days were therefore welcome.

75. In the area of human resources management, it was essential to ensure fairness, equity and transparency and to establish accountability with respect to decisions on appointments. The appointment process in the Organization had not been transparent and lines of authority and responsibility were often blurred. His delegation was therefore pleased that attention was being paid to enhancing accountability by more clearly defining authority and responsibility and by introducing mechanisms to monitor and review the decision-making process with respect to appointments.

76. A long-term career development plan that placed emphasis on mobility was needed in order to develop and retain versatile, multi-skilled and experienced staff within the Organization. It was thus a matter of concern that the Organization offered very few opportunities for staff to move, especially between Headquarters and field offices. He therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals to promote mobility within the Secretariat and in particular to move from a voluntary to a managed approach to staff mobility.

77. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that, at a time when the United Nations was facing severe financial constraints, the need to use human resources responsibly and accountably could not be overemphasized. The timing of the Secretary-General's initiative to strengthen the United Nations management system was propitious; during the Millennium Summit the previous month, the heads of State and Government had called upon the Secretariat to make optimal use of the existing human and material resources by adopting the best management practices and technologies available.

78. It was encouraging to see that the authors of the reform package had followed an integrated approach with a focus on developing a culture of accountability. It was also gratifying to note that the Secretary-General, in preparing the report in document A/55/253, had largely relied on ideas that had emerged from his consultation with both managers and the staff. Although his delegation was generally pleased with that report, it found that certain aspects such as recruitment, placement and promotion, mobility and contractual arrangements, required further clarifications and even adjustments in order to ensure that the reform package would be of benefit to all concerned. One strand that ran throughout the reform proposals, and was also an important element of resolution 53/221, was the question of enhanced delegation of authority to program managers. It was essential that such delegation of authority should be accompanied by well-designed mechanisms of accountability. The exercise of discretionary power needed to be accompanied by clearly delineated internal monitoring and control procedures. There was also a need for more effective performance monitoring and evaluation systems in order to eliminate inefficiency.

79. His delegation agreed with the widely shared perception that the existing process for filling posts was complex and cumbersome. Member States had frequently expressed concern over the inordinate length of the recruitment process which had led to an unprecedented number of vacancies. At the same time, there had been persistent complaints that the job criteria were tailor-made for specific individuals and that vacancies were published only as a pro forma exercise. In that context, he regretted that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was not applied throughout the United Nations system and was, in fact, restricted to only a small segment of the total staff strength of the Secretariat. His delegation believed that the initiative to reform the management of the Organization provided a unique opportunity to address those and other perennial problems that had long afflicted the United Nations.

80. The key to the successful and effective implementation of the positive initiatives contained in the report lay in a clear delineation of the exact role and responsibility of the central review body and of the Office of Human Resources Management.

81. The Secretary-General's recommendations on mobility had much to recommend them; while it was sometimes said that mobility eroded institutional memory and led to creating a class of generalists in the United Nations, it must also be borne in mind that fresh blood brought in fresh ideas. Nevertheless, his delegation believed that, as ACABQ had also pointed out, the principle of mobility should be applied with due regard to those posts where institutional memory and technical expertise were imperative.

82. One aspect of the Secretary-General's proposals that had already begun to cause controversy concerned the replacement of permanent contracts with continuing contracts. It had been argued that permanent contracts were indispensable in order to ensure the independence of the international civil service and job security and that the proposal might undermine equitable geographical distribution and promote cronyism. Although the Secretary-General had defended the proposal on grounds, in particular, of administrative simplicity, his delegation believed that the subject needed further discussion and a frank exchange of views with the staff before the General Assembly could approve the package.

83. The Secretary-General had stated in the context of his 1997 reform proposals that he envisioned the United Nations as an organization that fostered management excellence and was accountable for achieving the results determined by the Member States. His delegation believed that to be crucial to the reform exercise.

84. **Mr. Suh** Dae-won (Republic of Korea) said that while the success of every organization, whether private or public, depended largely on the viability and competence of its human resources, that was particularly true for the United Nations, which allocated about 70 per cent of its financial resources to personnel costs. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had already implemented many efficiency measures that had a direct impact on human resources management, but a forward-looking strategy for human resources management was also necessary in order to sustain the high standards of efficiency and competence of the staff. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the report on a comprehensive human resources management implementation program and attached particular importance to recruitment, mobility, performance management and career development. While appreciating the commitment of the Secretary-General to creating an organizational culture that was responsive and results-oriented and promoted career development and managerial excellence, he pointed out that it was also important to ensure respect for diversity, due process, transparency and equal and fair treatment as well as geographical and gender balance.

85. The delegation of authority to program managers was an integral part of reforming human resources management. In order to achieve improved delivery of mandated programmes, program managers should be provided with the requisite managerial authority and responsibility but, at the same time, there was also a need for an effective mechanism to ensure the full accountability of the delegated authority.

86. His delegation also noted with concern that the average age of the staff continued to increase and was currently 45.8 years. The age at the entry level for P-2 was as high as 37.9 years, a figure that had risen by five years since 1988. In order to redress the balance it was necessary to facilitate the inflow of young staff and remedy the inefficiency in the current recruitment process. The time required to recruit a staff member, while it had been higher in the past, was still unreasonably high and his delegation looked for a further improvement from the Secretariat's plan to introduce a system that would speed up the recruitment process.

87. His delegation welcomed the efforts by the Secretariat to recruit candidates on the basis of national competitive examinations and also the continued decrease in the number of unrepresented and under-represented countries in the staff of the Secretariat and the increase in the number of countries within the desirable range. While it was encouraging to see an increase of 1.5 per cent in the number of female staff in the Secretariat as compared with the previous year, the number of women at the senior director levels remained low.

88. Another area that merited attention was the management of staff mobility which was essential in the context of the scope and complexity of the Organization's current activity. Staff mobility was also vital to career development, particularly with respect to young staff. In that context, he noted with concern that staff mobility policy remained on an ad hoc and voluntary basis and hoped that a managed approach to mobility would be introduced.

89. In conclusion, his delegation, noting that there was an unprecedented number of staff vacancies and that up to 400 staff would be retiring each year for the next five years, pointed out that, although the large-scale departure of staff would pose a challenge to human resources management, it would also present an opportunity to rejuvenate the Secretariat, to redress gender and geographical imbalance and to increase mobility within the United Nations system.

90. **Mr. Li Taizhang** (China) said that his delegation fully supported the statement that had been made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and also supported the arrangements proposed by the Secretary-General in his report for the next stage of human resources management reform (A/55/253). It was essential, in conducting the reform, to ensure that the process of change was orderly and gradual and that major problems were solved as the reforms progressed so that human resources management could build on concrete results.

91. One area on which the current reform should focus was the more effective application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution. His delegation had noted that, despite the great emphasis consistently placed by the United Nations on the importance of strictly applying the principle of equitable geographical distribution, instances of inequality, as well as abuse of power by the heads of individual departments and offices, continued to exist. There was a need for the clear definition of individual authority and responsibility as well as for an effective monitoring mechanism. The Office of Human Resources Management should have the authority for overall planning and the management of posts, in order to achieve the goal of their proper allocation among Member States, to correct the current situation in which personnel decisions were the prerogative of the heads of a few departments rather than of personnel officers, to increase the employment of nationals from under-represented Member States and to ensure fair treatment for Member States that had been excluded from certain important positions in key departments. To that end, his delegation proposed that the Office of Human Resources Management should report regularly to the Member States on the implementation of the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

92. His delegation had noted that, under the current appointment system, permanent contracts were awarded to certain members of the staff, thus stifling competition and the desire of staff members to achieve excellence. In certain departments, and to varying degrees, individual staff members had little desire to succeed and little incentive to perform well. The appointment system proposed by the Secretary-General which included short-term, fixed-term and continuing contracts was therefore to be welcomed, and it was to be hoped that the new appointment system would gradually eliminate the current system of permanent contracts, thus creating a work environment where staff members were motivated to succeed.

93. The establishment of appropriate career planning and performance management mechanisms as well as a career development and training system would ensure that the Organization was in a position to employ and provide career development to aspiring and capable young people. His delegation had noted that in certain departments young people who had been trained by the United Nations were not given appointments or additional training opportunities and that, instead, former staff members who had long ago separated or retired were employed on a freelance basis. That had a negative impact on the efficiency and quality of work. His delegation found it hard to accept the justification that had been offered for that practice to the effect that local recruitment cost less than the international recruitment of temporary staff. While not opposed to the employment of capable freelance staff, his delegation felt that the failure to employ qualified young people who had undergone specialized training was wasteful. If that practice was allowed to continue indefinitely, it would also create an imbalance in the age structure of the staff. It was therefore to be hoped that, through the current reform, the Office of Human Resources Management would establish a more forward-looking career development and training system so that young people would be given training and qualified candidates would be recruited for suitable posts in a timely fashion.

94. While noting that the Secretary-General had already confirmed in his report that the period to fill a vacancy should not in future exceed 120 days, he pointed out that written announcements of vacancies often arrived late in Member States. Moreover, it was sometimes impossible to determine whether a vacancy was open for internal or external recruitment and it was therefore difficult to make the necessary preparations to recommend candidates. In addition, the United Nations rarely provided feedback on the candidates that had been formally recommended by Member States. He hoped that there would be increasing transparency in the future with regard to the recruitment process and that Member States would be informed in writing well in advance so that they would be able to start preparations early in accordance with their own conditions and requirements.

95. Human resources management reform in the United Nations was a difficult and complex process in

which it was important to have not only clearly defined reform goals but also practical measures to solve existing major problems. As always, his delegation would actively participate with other Member States in the informal consultations on human resources management reform and other personnel questions.

96. **Mr. Kataria** (India) endorsed the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation was pleased to note that dialogue between management and staff on the subject of human resources management reform had been assigned priority and agreed that mechanisms of accountability, monitoring processes and control procedures were integral parts of any new initiatives in the area of managing human resources.

97. The Secretary-General had rightly emphasized the fundamental role to be played by the staff of the Organization. His delegation continued to believe in the importance of giving the staff a say in the effective and efficient functioning of the United Nations, and it hoped that the Organization would be in a position to provide conditions of service capable of attracting and retaining staff with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, even though there was currently some doubt as to the possibility of achieving that objective, given the limited human and financial resources available to the Organization. It trusted that the reform initiatives were not motivated by the intention to reduce either the budget of the Organization or its staff.

98. The unprecedented number of vacancies expected over the coming five years afforded an important opportunity to rejuvenate the Organization, but it was to be hoped that the posts would be filled quickly. While agreeing that program managers who were responsible and accountable for delivering substantive results must also be responsible for taking the final decisions on the selection of the staff who would fulfil those work programmes, his delegation looked forward to hearing the views of other delegations on that matter. He agreed with the emphasis placed by ACABQ on the need for advance planning in the recruitment process that would give additional time for program managers to screen and assess the suitability of all qualified candidates. Any measure that would enable the posts to be filled within a maximum of 120 days was to be welcomed.

99. While being generally supportive of the mobility concept and the proposed contractual arrangements, his delegation looked forward to further discussions on those matters in the informal consultations. His delegation considered career development and conditions of service to be the most crucial issues in the field of human resources management since they largely determined the success of any human resource development initiative.

100. He noted that the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations had commented in its report (A/55/305-S/2000/809) on issues related to human resources management and had pointed out, in particular, that the United Nations needed to take steps to ensure that it became a meritocracy in order to reverse the alarming trend of qualified personnel, particularly the young, leaving the Organization. His delegation endorsed that view but pointed out that, under the present system, meritocracy only seemed to involve a few countries. In that connection he pointed out that the Secretary-General's report on resource requirements for implementing the recommendations of the Panel (A/55/507) envisaged transfers of human and financial resources from certain developmental sectors in order to strengthen peace operations. He hoped that the Secretary-General would note the serious reservations that the developing countries had in that connection and looked forward to further discussions on the subject.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

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Chairman: Ms. Dinic (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Croatia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Other matters

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00-72369 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 116: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/54/793; A/55/352 and Corr.1, A/55/499 and A/55/514)

Agenda item 123: Human resources management (*continued*) (A/53/955; A/54/257, A/54/279 and Corr.1 and A/54/450; A/55/57 and Add.1, A/55/168, A/55/253 and Corr.1, A/55/270, A/55/397, A/55/399 and Corr.1, A/55/427, A/55/494, A/55/499 and A/55/514; A/55/514; A/C.5/54/2 and A/C.5/54/21; A/C.5/54/L.3; A/C.5/55/L.3; A/C.5/55/CRP.1 and CRP.2)

1. **Mr. Grandjean** (President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA)), said that, in view of the lead role played by the United Nations, the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253 and Corr.1) was of major importance for the entire common system, in particular the specialized agencies from which FICSA drew the majority of its membership. It should therefore be the subject of broad consultations to avoid conflict with initiatives taken at the common system level and to draw from the experience of other organizations.

2. Although the United Nations management had made great efforts to seek the support of the staff for its proposals, it was apparent that the staff did not consider that the consultations had been satisfactory. That was in contrast to a similar exercise that had been conducted in the World Health Organization (WHO) as a joint venture between staff and management which, although falling short of the principle of collective bargaining enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, had been broadly satisfactory and had secured the general support of the WHO Staff Association. The staff of the United Nations, however, did not feel involved in the reform and did not trust the process. In that context, he noted the satisfactory outcome of the fiftieth session of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board the previous July where the Board's tripartite structure, associated with a broad commitment to work for the common good, had borne fruit. A project such as the reform of human resources management in the United Nations was amenable to the same process.

3. The reform was being proposed against the background of pressures that had constrained the budget of the Organization for the past 10 years or so. The premise was that the United Nations would deliver ever more in terms of programmes with ever less in terms of financial resources. The staff of the intergovernmental organizations, supported by some of the executive heads, considered that there was a limit to the slimming-down process and that the time had come to reconsider certain assumptions underlying the programme and budget.

4. The report of the Secretary-General abundantly illustrated the magnitude of the problem: for example, paragraph 11 (d) drew attention to the unprecedented number of vacancies (500 regular budget and 2,400 extrabudgetary posts). That seemed to indicate that the managers of the United Nations were putting the dedication of their colleagues under strain, that essential services were not being rendered and that the future was being compromised by excessive concentration on short-term needs.

5. Although the General Assembly had acknowledged, over a decade previously, that the terms and conditions of service were no longer competitive, the claims put forward by the staff had been rather modest in recent years. The reform document was silent on that issue. It referred to the need for a competitive compensation package to attract and retain high-quality staff and a good working environment but proposed nothing concrete. That was in spite of the fact that the Secretary-General, in his capacity as the representative of all the executive heads, had recently urged the International Civil Service Commission to address the issue of a real increase in the base/floor scale. Moreover, the representative of the United Nations had stated that consideration should be given to recommending a real salary increase. Although reference was made in the document to the need to attract, retain and motivate staff of the highest calibre at all levels, there was no attempt to address the associated cost of attaining that objective.

6. While FICSA could support many of the measures that had been taken, or that were envisaged for the future, the report failed in many respects to follow through its own logic, above all by not addressing the question of cost and thus indirectly suggesting that the reform was cost-neutral and there was no need to offer competitive salaries. FICSA urged the Committee to postpone the decision on the

document pending the receipt of detailed supplementary information, for example on the nature and implications of the proposed continuing appointment, as compared with the existing permanent and indefinite appointments.

7. One major omission was a recognition of the legitimate role of staff representatives and their right to be consulted on human resources policies and practices and to be given the opportunity to participate in and influence decisions on those matters. The proposed reform apparently reduced the role of staff representatives in the crucial area of recruitment. More participatory approaches towards the staff of the Organization were essential if the United Nations sincerely wished to address its staff recruitment and retention problems.

8. In conclusion, he said that numerous United Nations posts would soon be vacated in addition to those already vacant, and UNDP was laying off hundreds of staff members as a result of the downsizing and redeployment of its New York activities. He urged the Committee to instruct the management of the United Nations to face the opportunities raised by the "internal reality" of the 2,900 vacant posts, as stated in paragraph 11 (d) of the report. In short, the staff would like to see a more focused, proactive and effective plan of action which made a reality of the objective of putting people at the centre, as stated by the Secretary-General in paragraph 9 of the report.

9. **Ms. Madarshahi** (President of the Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA)) begin by drawing attention to two position papers submitted by CCISUA in connection with the items under consideration: document A/C.5/55/CRP.1 contained its comments on the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/C.5/55/253 and Corr.1) and document A/C.5/55/CRP.2 addressed the reform of the internal justice system. The latter paper offered a comprehensive proposal by CCISUA on the subject and complemented the report of the Joint Inspection Unit in document A/55/57.

10. The staff of the Organization, and of the United Nations system as a whole, was firmly committed to the values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility which had been highlighted at the Millennium Summit as fundamental values governing international relations in the new century. Change would be inevitable in order to realize those noble goals and the staff would support the Member States in any efforts to change procedures, structures and policies in order to create a more effective, credible and relevant organization capable of serving the peoples of the world. That could not, however, be a one-sided effort; the staff needed some assurance from management that the reform was to be a joint endeavour and would be carried through to completion in cooperation with the staff and with a respect for existing staff-management agreements.

11. On completion of the reform process the staff hoped that the Organization would emerge stronger, more effective, better equipped and more able to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world. To that end, the staff wished to work with management in parity and harmony and with open-mindedness on a basis involving communication, participation and agreement. The International Labour Office had led the way by entering into formal agreement with its staff with the concurrence of the member Governments. It was hard to see why such an agreement should not be emulated in other organizations. Yet, staff-management relations over the preceding 12 months had not involved consultation in the true sense. The staff representatives had expressed their disagreement with numerous aspects of the proposed reform programme and had put forward proposals, in particular, for improved arrangements relating to staff mobility and training, improved staff-management machinery and the adoption of a transparent approach to resolving the environmental problems besetting the Secretariat building.

12. The staff positions concerning the proposed human resources management reform as set out in document A/C.5/55/CRP.1 were consistent with the position taken by the General Assembly in its resolutions 51/226 and 53/221 concerning, in particular, the imperative of establishing a well-designed mechanism of accountability. On contractual arrangements the staff was firmly in favour of the retention of the institution of the permanent appointment which it regarded as conducive to the independence of the international civil service as recognized by the Charter and as a means of securing equitable geographical representation, equal representation of women and the retention of a

modicum of institutional memory. Above all, such contracts promoted the values of loyalty and commitment to the Organization, and to the international civil service as a whole. In that connection, the staff supported the General Assembly's call for a ratio of 70 per cent permanent appointments to 30 per cent temporary appointments in accordance with the provisions of resolutions 51/226 and 53/221.

13. The new system of appointment and promotion as proposed by the Secretary-General did not set out a clear-cut system of accountability. The Office of Human Resources Management would no longer have a central function in establishing and implementing human resources policies and practices. The proposed decentralized system would make programme managers responsible for such matters and the staff were concerned that that might give rise to a new type of cronyism. The staff comments on the Secretary-General's proposal to abolish the joint machinery for appointments and promotions were set out in paragraphs 12 to 14 of document A/C.5/55/CRP.1.

14. The staff acknowledged that mobility was an important factor in the employment and career development of an international civil servant but felt that the Secretary-General's proposals had not been convincingly argued. The basic principles underlying the proposals for mobility did not adequately allow for the loss of contact with cultural and family bonds and ties experienced by staff members who had left their home countries. Above all, the proposed mobility scheme showed scant respect for institutional knowledge and memory which would be hard to maintain under a system of constant rotation. It might also be seen as incompatible with the precept of the Charter that the Organization should only retain staff meeting the highest standards of competence and integrity.

15. The high regard in which many United Nations attitudes and practices were held throughout the world did not extend to its labour practices, in particular the conciliation, mediation and conflict resolution procedures and those in the areas of internal appeals and administrative justice on labour-related cases. The proposals of CCISUA for a new system of justice in the Secretariat were set out in document A/C.5/55/CRP.2. She hoped that the Committee would find time at the current session to review the issue thoroughly and decide to establish the long overdue new system of justice.

16. The present arrangements regarding staff-management relations were also in urgent need of review, and she felt that the issue should be handled along the lines exemplified by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, ICSC and ILO.

17. In conclusion, she drew attention to the dangers of the working environment in the Headquarters building and in facilities in other cities, such as Vienna and Jerusalem. In particular, the question of asbestos abatement needed to be addressed systematically and openly. The same applied to other health hazards, such as the existence of electromagnetic fields in the Headquarters building, which were the direct result of outdated equipment. Fire hazards were another potentially deadly issue in a building which had no sprinklers and which fire engines could not approach closely as the ground was apparently incapable of bearing the weight of such heavy vehicles. Such a situation would be regarded as intolerable in any Member State, and she urged the Committee, as a matter of priority, to approve a comprehensive remedial programme addressing all environmental hazards and upgrading the fire and safety measures.

18. **Mr. Fedorov** (Russian Federation) said that it was already possible to make a preliminary assessment of the measures being implemented to reform human resources management in the United Nations to adjust their direction and to plan further steps to achieve the objectives of the reform. However, the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253 and Corr.1) raised a number of questions that required answers.

19. In paragraph 3 of the introduction, he was surprised to read that significant progress had been achieved in carrying forward the reform, particularly as the document as a whole seemed to indicate that, in certain key areas of human resources management, the reform was making little progress.

20. Paragraph 25 (a) referred to the development by the Office of Human Resources Management of a skills inventory for all existing staff. In that connection, he pointed out that the year 2000 was nearly over but no information had been provided indicating that the project was close to completion.

21. Paragraph 25 (b) said that OHRM would continue to develop a human resources forecasting and modelling capacity. However, it appeared that the Secretariat had little time for modelling or for more

effectively assessing needs at a time when, as pointed out in paragraph 11 (d) of the report, the number of vacant posts had reached 500 regular budget and 2,400 extrabudgetary posts. In addition, it had to be borne in mind that that during each of the next five years, up to 400 staff members were due to retire. There was no indication in the document of any practical steps being taken by OHRM to resolve the problem of the ageing of the Secretariat. In that connection, his delegation shared the view expressed by ACABQ in paragraph 5 of document A/55/499.

22. Paragraph 35 (c) said that programme managers were to be responsible for taking the final decision on the selection of staff for specific posts. However, the appointment of staff had to be made on the basis of merit, paying due regard to the principles of geographical representation and gender balance which, according to paragraph 12 of document A/55/397, were the responsibility of OHRM, a fact that reduced to a minimum the freedom of programme managers to decide on the selection of staff. Moreover, paragraph 35 (e) of document A/55/253 said that, in the event of problems with respect to compliance with the selection process the case would be referred to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. Moreover, paragraph 34 of the same document did not refer to efficiency, competence and integrity as being among the principles underlying the Organization's staff selection policies. The situation, therefore, was that, on the one hand, OHRM was not responsible for staff recruitment but it was, at the same time, the chief arbiter that took the final decision.

23. Referring to annex II, paragraph 14 (a), of the document, he asked in what circumstances no vacancy announcement was needed and suggested that it might be on the basis of document A/55/397 paragraph 31 (c) where reference was made to "a roster of qualified candidates as an alternative to the vacancy announcement". In addition, he pointed out that, in paragraph 21 of annex II it was essential to specify time limits for the resubmission of recommendations so as to comply with the time limit of 120 days for filling vacancies.

24. Regarding mobility (section D), his delegation supported the principles set out in annex II to the report of the International Civil Service Commission for the year 2000 (A/55/30). Career progression should not depend only in part on evidence of mobility, as proposed in paragraph 5 (d) of annex III to the report before the Committee (A/55/253), but to a great extent. The transfer of staff members between divisions, departments and even occupational groups within the same duty station could not be called mobility. Regrettably, the report did not focus on field service as an integral part of a career with the United Nations, nor did it deal adequately with the problem of reabsorption of staff following mission assignment. His delegation supported, in that connection, the recommendation made in paragraph 14 of the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/55/499).

25. He welcomed the new mechanisms for increasing mobility. He could not, however, support the training and learning programmes proposed in paragraph 23 of annex III to the report, since the allocation of budgetary resources for any training other than advanced training was inappropriate. The concept of lateral mobility remained unclear to him. Staff members unsuccessful in finding new posts by the time the occupancy-limit in respect of their current posts expired should be separated from the Organization rather than reassigned. Mobility should not become a means of transferring underperforming staff members from one division or department to another, thus impeding the recruitment of new, qualified specialists from outside the Organization. While his delegation would support further measures to increase mobility, it considered that the Administration should make more effective use of the tools already available to it under the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules. It appeared from the report that the Secretariat was continuing to promote staff members serving in the General Service and related categories to the Professional category, notwithstanding the provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221. He wished to have a breakdown by country of the staff members promoted since 1 July 1999 and to receive clarification as to the reasons for which internal vacancy announcements continue to be issued in respect of posts at the P-2 level. The promotion of staff members in contravention of decisions taken by the Assembly must cease and disciplinary action must be taken against the persons responsible.

26. Turning to the issue of contractual arrangements (section E), he said that the time had come to streamline the multiplicity of types and conditions of appointments. The abolition of permanent appointments would reflect the needs of the times. It

was not clear from the report, however, how the proposed continuing appointments would differ from the existing arrangements. He wished to know, for example, what indemnity would be paid to staff members whose appointments were terminated by the Administration, and whether there were plans to simplify the procedure for the dismissal of staff members whose services were unsatisfactory. As his delegation had requested in 1998, ICSC and JIU should prepare a comprehensive study on the subject of a gradual transfer by the United Nations to a system of non-career appointments.

27. With regard to competencies and continuous learning (section G), there should be a strong emphasis on self-study programmes. As to performance management (section H), the measures set out in paragraph 12 of annex VII to the report for dealing with under performance were unacceptable. Apparently, efforts were made to assess the skills and competencies of poor performers in order to find assignments that corresponded better with their skills. Surely, it was for staff members to adapt themselves to the needs of the Organization and not the other way round.

28. Paragraph 3 of annex VII referred to an additional performance management process for senior managers. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on senior-level appointments in the United Nations and its programmes and funds (A/55/43) was of considerable interest in that regard. He looked forward to the report's introduction in the Committee and to the issuance of an official document containing the comments of the Secretary-General thereon.

29. Regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/55/399), he said that the establishment of gender balance, which was to have been a gradual process, was being rushed and had become an end in itself. Indeed, heads of offices were being urged to reflect progress towards the goal of 50/50 gender distribution in the appraisal of the performance of managers. There were even units in which women actually outnumbered men. Yet, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the main criteria in recruiting staff should be efficiency, competence and integrity, not gender. The decision to give preference to women not only in the recruitment process, but also in respect of promotion (ST/AI/1999/9) was a mistake.

30. Lastly, with reference to the report of the Secretary-General on safety and security of United Nations personnel (A/55/494), he said that he saw no justification for the proposal to appoint a Security Coordinator at the Assistant Secretary-General level, given that there was already a Security Coordinator at the Under-Secretary-General level. He wished to know what resources were allocated from the regular budget to fund the Office of the Security Coordinator, at Headquarters and in the field.

Agenda item 17: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments (*continued*)

(g) Appointment of members of the International Civil Service Commission (*continued*)

31. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) announced the withdrawal of the candidature of Ms. Corazon Alma G. de Leon for appointment to the International Civil Service Commission.

Other matters

32. **Mr. Bender** (Chief of the Facilities Management Division), replying to the questions posed by the representative of Costa Rica at the Committee's 15th meeting, held on Monday, 23 October 2000, confirmed that construction work had been undertaken on the fourth floor of the Secretariat building in the premises occupied by the United Nations Federal Credit Union. In addition, a certified contractor had carried out asbestos abatement in the same location. However, no asbestos-containing materials had been disturbed during the construction work. Air-quality tests and sampling for asbestos fibres had been conducted before, during and after the abatement activity, and the measured values had been found to be well below the established safe thresholds. The Office of Central Support Services was taking all necessary measures to safeguard the health and well-being of all occupants of the building. Since asbestos-containing materials had been widely used in the building at the time of its construction, a definitive solution to the problem would be achieved only with the implementation of the capital master plan prepared by the Secretary-General.

33. **Ms. Incera** (Costa Rica) said that air-quality tests conducted on behalf of the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica in the area in question had confirmed the presence of asbestos fibres, indicating that asbestos-containing

materials had indeed been disturbed during the construction work, which had not been confined to the Credit Union premises. Furthermore, the area had not been sealed during the abatement activity. She would like to see a copy of the contract concluded with the company that had undertaken that work. Her delegation had previously drawn attention to the high electrical and magnetic field (EMF) levels on the twenty-seventh floor of the Secretariat building and to the high incidence of certain types of cancer among staff members working on that floor. She had therefore been concerned to discover that, while a number of staff members had been relocated to other floors, their offices had been occupied by other staff members, exposing them to the same hazards.

34. Regarding the fire that had broken out on the twenty-eighth floor on Friday, 27 October 2000, she asked whether it was true that the fire trucks of the New York City Fire Department had been prevented from approaching the Secretariat building because of the risk that the garage ceiling would collapse under their weight, and, if that was the case, how the Administration would cope with a large blaze. She also wished to know where the fire hydrants were located.

35. **Mr. Bender** (Chief of the Facilities Management Division) said that, during the construction work undertaken on the fourth floor, parts of the ceiling had been opened. It had been decided, at that time, to remove certain asbestos-containing materials that had become accessible. However, no asbestos-containing materials had been disturbed during the construction work itself. The removal of those materials had been carried out by a licensed contractor under the supervision of in-house staff, who had ensured that all the proper precautions were taken. The affected area had been completely sealed, and there had been full compliance with the procedures established by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. The results of the air-quality testing performed before, during and after the asbestos removal had been transmitted to the Medical Services Division. Air quality in the building as a whole was tested every six months and had always been found satisfactory.

36. The smoke incident on the twenty-eighth floor had been dealt with promptly by the employees of the Consolidated Edison Company, and no one had been harmed. There were Siamese connections at the Forty-Third Street vehicle entrance to the Secretariat building for the use of the New York City Fire Department. The Fire Unit of the Security and Safety Service was able to deal with small fires and had a direct link to the Fire Department in case of major blazes.

37. **Ms. Incera** (Costa Rica) said that the Chief of the Facilities Management Division had left many of her questions unanswered. His failure to take account of the results of the air-quality tests conducted on behalf of the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica was lamentable. The results of the Secretariat's tests were of questionable value, since they were carried out in the corridors, rather than in the enclosed spaces in which staff members and delegates had to work. She remained convinced that there was a problem with asbestos contamination on the fourth floor and that the Administration was ill-equipped to cope with a large five.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.